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Three Oaks Village councilmembers focus on sidewalks, water lines **PAGE 3**

New Buffalo City Council amends ordinances regarding safety **PAGE 4**

Chikaming Township Board updated on possible transmission line rebuild town hall **PAGE 5**

Raiders back on the winning track **PAGE 8**

'Some Enchanted Evening' heralds the end of summer **PAGE 11**

Zoe's Bakery showcases Asian culinary delights **PAGE 18**

WAY TO GO...

DEDICATED COMMUNITY MEMBERS HONORED BY NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP BOARD

— PAGE 6 —

PHOTO OF ALEX OTT AND NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP CLERK JUDY ZABICKI WITH AGNES CONWAY BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

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Three Oaks Village councilmembers focus on sidewalks, water lines

BY THERESE DONNELLY

Sidewalks in the Village of Three Oaks may soon see progress, as the village council has begun looking into possible funding options.

During the regular council meeting Wednesday, Sept. 13, councilmember Lois Jones brought up the matter, noting the village had an ordinance regarding sidewalks since 2010. Several studies and planning sessions have also taken place, but little enforcement or construction have been done.

Jones proposed the village place excess money from the general fund into a CD and use these proceeds, plus future marijuana revenue, to repair and replace damaged sidewalks throughout the village. She noted this could be a one-time project that would benefit the entire village.

Village manager Dan Faulkner noted the village is already committed to a project to replace the Hickory Street bridge over the railroad track and needs to address lead service lines in the water system. The state of Michigan is requiring that 25% of service lines with unknown materials be studied and identified by 2025. Lead lines will need to be replaced. Faulkner suggested not making any commitment to sidewalk work yet. Jones said the general fund has nearly $2 million and could cover the proposed sidewalk work.

Councilmember Jim Kramer noted the village had previously covered the cost of sidewalks along the north-south running streets, though Faulkner explained that money had come from a grant rather than village funds.

Councilmember Tyler Ream suggested the village accumulate funds from marijuana revenue to cover the work, but Kramer said the revenue and interest would not keep up with the rising cost of concrete.

Councilmembers agreed no decisions could be made at the September meeting but that they would continue to look into the issue. Councilmember Joe Hinman, noting the sidewalks are a public infrastructure, suggested the possibility of allowing residents to vote on a millage.

The lead line investigation has begun. Andrew Rudd of Wightman Associates told the council the project has gone out to bid. Four companies submitted bids and Rudd recommended Plummers Environmental Services' bid of $137,535, which the council approved. Inspection will include visual examination of water meter pits along service lines, where the material used in lines is uncertain. The study portion of the project is funded by grants, Rudd said, but line replacement is not.

Revisiting an issue from previous meetings, village president Richards Smith suggested the council consider ordinances regarding golf carts on village streets. The state already has a vehicle code addressing carts, but allows local governments to create their own ordinances. Smith said the Three Oaks Ford dealership is considering offering carts for rent.

The council tabled the issue until their October meeting.

Three Saturdays in October will see extra activity in the village.

Large item pickup will take place Oct. 7. Faulkner said Lakeshore Recycling will work with members of the Masonic Lodge and the American Legion to collect items residents leave on curbsides for collection. Similar to Berrien County collections, freon, electronics, construction material and tires will not be accepted.

The council approved a request from Journeyman Distillery to close a portion of Generations Drive Saturday, Oct. 21, for Brewfest.

Trick or treating in the village will take place the following week from 4 to 6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 28.

The council approved a 5% wage increase for village employees, with the exception of Faulkner, whose pay is set by contract.

This year will be the 50th anniversary of the Apple Cider Century bike ride. A presentation will begin at 6 p.m. Friday, Sept. 22, at Dewey Cannon Park to recognize founder Bryan Volstorf for his work.

During public comment, Tom Flint informed the council that a petition has started at protectourtownships.org to request more communication regarding AEP's plans to rebuild transmission lines in the area.

We all have the need to feel special.
— Janet Jackson

Local Government Meetings

New Buffalo Times

Democracy Requires Transparency

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City Council meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30PM
CITY OF NEW BUFFALO PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 5:30PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP BOARD
PETE RAHM, MICHELLE HEIT, JUDY H. ZABICKI, PATTY IAZZETTO, JACK ROGERS
Board meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 4PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:30PM
SHERIFF BERRIEN COUNTY
L. Paul Bailey, Sheriff
Chuck Heit, Undersheriff
NEW BUFFALO AREA RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
Meets at 10AM on the 2nd Wednesday of every other month (odd) at New Buffalo Township Hall, 17425 Red Arrow Highway New Buffalo
NEW BUFFALO AREA SCHOOLS BOARD
LISA WERNER, JOHN HASKINS, DENISE CHURCHILL, BRADLEY BURNER, VANESSA THUN, STEPHEN DONNELLY, GREG VOSBERG
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP BOARD
DAVID BUNTE, PAULA DUDIAK, LIZ RETTIG, RICHARD SULLIVAN, BILL MARSKE
Chikaming Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30PM
THREE OAKS
THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7PM

VILLAGE OF THREE OAKS BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7PM
GRAND BEACH
Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7PM
MARY ROBERTSON, CLERK
HARRY WALDER BLAKE O'HALLORAN, JAMES BRACEWELL, PETER DOERR, EDWARD BRANDES

MICHIANA
VILLAGE OF MICHIANA COUNCIL
Meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 1PM

New Buffalo City Council amends ordinances regarding safety

BY THERSE DONNELLY

The New Buffalo City Council approved the first readings of two ordinance additions aimed at improving safety in the city.

During the council's Monday, Sept. 18, meeting, city manager Darwin Watson said there had been several water rescues during red flag days and rough weather over the summer. The addition of Article VI of Chapter 7 will allow the regulation of entry into water from city property under certain circumstances.

Mayor John Humphrey noted several people who ignored warnings had endangered not only their own lives, but those of lifeguards and other rescuers. The new amendment will prohibit people from entering the water in places restricted by posted signs or by city personnel due to unsafe conditions. Violators will face a $500 civil fine.

Article VI of Chapter 10 will restrict the operation of golf carts on city streets. The amendment includes age restrictions, and requires safety features, including reflectors and turn signals. Use of carts will be restricted from Buffalo, Whittaker and Clay streets, but drivers will be allowed to cross these streets using the most direct line of crossing.

Several councilmembers said they had witnessed unsafe golf cart use over the previous summer, including carts carrying more passengers than allowed, and swerving around railroad crossing gates. Humphrey called some of the actions he'd seen "obscenely reckless."

The council may waive registration requirements for special events that use golf carts and the article does not apply to public officials performing official duties.

Both ordinances will be published and be effective 20 days after publication.

The council also passed a resolution to encourage the Planning Commission to have regular monthly meetings. In 2017, the council passed an ordinance permitting the Commission to have regular quarterly meetings and special meetings as needed, but Watson explained the Commission is responsible for fostering development and making recommendations to the council.

Humphrey said the new resolution is not a criticism of the Planning Commission, but an issue of logistics.

Watson told the council there is a tentative agreement with employees represented by the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees. Terms include a 3% annual wage increase for every year of the agreement's duration. The council approved the agreement.

The council also approved a special event application for the annual Halloween Parade. This year's parade will by Sunday, Oct. 29. Line up begins at 2 p.m. and the parade begins at 3. Trick or treat will follow from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Plans to paint the replica lighthouse at the public beach drew comments from members of the public. The lighthouse was originally painted white with red trim, but was switched to blue trim a few years ago to match other structures at the beach. Marcie Ritter, who donated the lighthouse as a memorial to her husband G. Charles Ritter, said she had been given no notice before the previous painting and had not been contacted this time. She said she would rather see the lighthouse returned to red trim.

Some residents near Oselka Park asked the council why crews had dug up one of the park's retaining ponds, removing plant life, and had plans to return the next day for the second. The council and Watson said they did not authorize any work and would instruct city police to halt any further excavating.

Humphrey said there was a history of people taking "unilateral action" on decisions, and it needed to be addressed.

The council approved a $16,400 bid from Hostetler Lawn and Landscaping to recondition Field 2 and perform maintenance work on Fields 1 and 4.

Rising construction costs have caused the city to alter plans for the Municipal Marina Utilities project. Only one contractor submitted a bid for the project, and Watson said that bid exceeded the amount of the grant funding the work.

Instead, the council agreed to split the project into two phases, using the current grant for one portion, then applying for additional grants to fund the second phase.

The council declined a proposal to install tobacco-related vending machines in public areas.

AI will probably most likely lead to the end of the world, but in the meantime, there'll be great companies.
— Sam Altman

Chad and Heather Gradowski, owners of the property at 425 S. Whittaker Street, addressed the council to request a waiver in utility fees to connect their property to the city sewer system, which will require tunneling under Whittaker Street to the sewer line on the other side of the street. Chad Gradowski said the property had previously used an easement to connect through the sewer line at 427 S. Whittaker, but the property had recently been sold and the new owner had capped off the connection. Noting the cost to connect would cost several thousand dollars, and resolving the issue in civil court could take years, he asked the council to consider waiving a portion of the associated fees.

Humphrey said he could see no legal way to waive the costs, and the city could not force a private property owner to allow a connection. He suggested fronting the connection costs and seeking renumeration in civil court.

Humphrey said there are several properties in the city that do not comply with current sewer connection requirements, which state each property to have a direct connection to the sewer line. He said as properties are sold, these connections may be identified and required to be brought into compliance.

Nora Howe of the New Buffalo Lifeguard Committee thanked the council for supporting the city lifeguard program, noting there were many rescues at the beach this year. She also asked the council to consider putting swim buoys in earlier next year, noting personal watercraft had encroached the swimming area several times.

Property owner Deborah Schmidt asked the council to reconsider the inspection fees for long-term rentals. She noted she had to pay the same rate as short-term rentals despite keeping the same tenants. She said the costs made it difficult to provide affordable long-term rentals.

Humphrey said the fees help cover the cost of code enforcement but the fees may be revisited.

Chikaming Township Board updated on possible transmission line rebuild town hall

APPROVES POLICY REGARDING SPEED STUDIES

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

A chance to engage in a town hall type of discussion with representatives from Indiana Michigan (I & M) Power with regards to the New Buffalo Bridgman Transmission Line Rebuild Project may occur.

Chikaming Township Supervisor David Bunte said at the Chikaming Township Board of Trustees' Thursday, Sept. 14, meeting that he's been talking with Mona Livingston, external affairs manager for I & M, and that they're closer to solidifying a town hall meeting, which would be tentively scheduled for Oct. 8 or 9, with AEP. One meeting would take place in Three Oaks, while another would be at Chikaming. Bunte said that the time and date would be on social media.

Bunte said it's being requested that questions be submitted by Sept. 25 via I & M's website or to a citizen's group, "Protect Our Townships," which will ensure that AEP gets them.

There would also be a virtual opportunity for participation, which Bunte assumes will be Zoom.

In the meeting with AEP officials this week, Bunte said that he might suggest that additional questions that haven't been answered be allowed at the town hall.

Board members approved a policy regarding speed studies.

The policy states that, any property owner or resident who wishes to petition the board for a resolution requesting a speed study for any section of township roadway must draft a petition that includes the following before submitting to the township board for review: state the starting and ending point of the segment of road they wish the study to include, state the reason for submitting the request that a speed study be undertaken, obtain the names and addresses of the property owners that are within the road segment stated and obtain the signatures of 30% of all property owners that are within the segment of road stated and are in support of the speed study request.

Once the above has been submitted to Bunte, the request will be placed on the next board meeting agenda for review.

Bunte said that once a speed request has been submitted, the policy is that another one isn't taken in that same stretch of roadway for 10 years "so you're stuck with that speed limit for 10 years."

"So we really want to make sure because of one individual's request, we're not just randomly throwing out these speed study requests to the road department," he said.

Board members reviewed the results of study requests that have recently been brought to the board: from Prairie Road, the road department is requesting the state police set a speed limit of 40 miles per hour from Youngren Road to Red Arrow and 35 from Red Arrow to the north end; for Three Oaks Road, the speed study shows the 45 limit isn't applicable anymore and it's being requested that it be rescinded and returned to 55 "with a condensed school, now three different schools, in that," Bunte said; Warren Woods Road, the speed study shows 85% speed just under 55 so it's not being submitted to the state police and that road will be revisited after it's paved and widened in the near future, with Bunte adding that crash data shows the speeds were not the main factor for crashes in that area but rather alcohol and drugs and that a study will be conducted on Red Arrow Highway Red from Youngren to Old M11 once the construction project there is completed.

Board members adopted a resolution accepting a Michigan Fire Equipment Grant for $10,000 to purchase 10 personal thermal imaging cameras as well as to approve the purchase. Fire chief Allen Weich said that after the purchase is completed, all the information, such as the invoice and payment trail, will be submitted to the state and they'll reimburse the township the $10,000.

Board members adopted a resolution accepting the federal grant for self contained breathing apparatuses.

Weich said it's a regional grant that involves Three Oaks and New Buffalo Township and is sponsored by Chikaming Township. The grant is $495,828.57, with a 5% match of $24,791.43 for a total project budget of $520,620. Chikaming will act as the fiduciary responsibility, with the other municipalities paying them their 5% portion.

Board members approved police chief Todd Taylor writing a grant through the Michigan Township Participating Plan Risk Reduction Program for solar/motion activated cameras for the parks and beaches.

Taylor said that the cameras can be used for the parks, which have experienced some vandalism, and that some pretty bad storms recently have caused some damage to the parks facilities. Taylor said if a big storm comes through, the cameras will allow Joe Martin, the parks director, to get on the phone and "see if there's any damage ahead of time prior to someone getting hurt."

Board members approved accepting the bid from Graham Service in the amount of $2500 to remove dead trees at the Berrien Street beach access.

Dedicated community members honored by New Buffalo Township Board

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Two dedicated, long serving members of the township were honored at the New Buffalo Township Board meeting Monday, Sept. 18.

Agnes Conway, who served the community for over 50 years, was given tributes from the county by Alex Ott, county commissioner, and the state.

From 1970 to 2008, Conway served the township, serving on the parks committee beginning in 1970 and being elected treasurer from 1984 to 1992 and as supervisor from 1996 to 2008. She also served as election inspector for eight years, the planning commission for six years and the Pine Grove Cemetery Board for 10 years. Conway was also a bus driver for several years.

Conway was instrumental in obtaining grants, such as for the water and sewer extension on U.S. 12 and fundraising for many projects, like the fence around the cemetery.

"You've been a true servant to the township, somebody we've all looked up to - thank you for many, many years of serving our community," township supervisor Michelle Heit said.

Board trustee Pete Rahm was also given tributes from the county and the state for having served for 31 consecutive years as a trustee as well as having served on the zoning board of appeals, The Pokagon Fund Board and the Local Revenue Sharing Board for many of those years. He's also served on many other community boards and is the "longest serving member of the New Buffalo Township Board ever recorded."

Rahm has served with five different supervisors and five different clerks.

Heit said that Rahm has always been her mentor.

"I wouldn't be here right now, I think, if it wasn't for you," she said.

Board members adopted a resolution regarding a Special Assessment District (SAD) for a water and sewer project on Exit Four and U.S. 12.

Matt Davis from Abonmarche said that the project consists of extending water and sewer service on U.S. 12 from Hoder Road west to I-94, both on the north and south side of the roads there.

He said that Public Act 188 is a provision for property owners to circulate petitions in favor of extending municipal services.

"In this case, 87% of land area is in support of water and sewer being extended to this area," Davis said.

He said the resolution is to accept the petitions that were submitted and to create the SAD, which will fund the cost of extending that water and sewer.

A series of resolutions will follow the first one that will set the SAD roll and public hearings will be held.

The project will be about $1.7 million. After the resolution adoption process this fall the design can be started, and the assessment district process will continue into the spring and summer. He said the "best case scenario" would be construction commencing late next year and finishing up late next year or the following spring.

The following preliminary approvals were given to adult use marihuana establishments based on the findings of fact obtained by the Planning Commission at their public hearing Aug. 1: Michigan Pure Green for an SLU to operate an adult-use marihuana retail establishment at 19169 US Hwy 12, with the condition that a marihuana establishment waiver be provided from the neighboring property, which is a hotel/motel that is partially homesteaded property, for which a waiver is required from is currently in the review process for SLU for a marihuana retail establishment (once they obtain preliminary approval the need for waiver is no longer necessary); New Buffalo Holdings LLC to operate an adult-use marihuana retail establishment at 11539 O'Brien Ct., with the condition that current use as a hotel will cease operations and establishment lighting must be downlighting and John McLeod for an SLU to operate an adult-use marihuana retail establishment at 11449 O'Brien Ct., with the condition that the establishment must use downlighting and that there will be no drive-thru operations permitted.

Board members approved a quote from Abonmarche for 58,900 for professional design and engineering services for a disc golf course at Glassman Park. Heit said that the proposal also includes a building with bathrooms and storage and an overhang for picnic tables.

A quote from Abonmarche for $16,800 for professional design and engineering service of a veteran's memorial park on township property at the corner of U.S. 12 and Clay Street was approved.

The amended Articles of Incorporation for the New Buffalo Area Recreational Authority were adopted. Heit said that some verbiage needed to be added to allow for the authority to apply for some state grants.

A resolution adopting a public comment policy was adopted.

A 4% hourly wage increase for the building inspector and plan reviewer retroactively starting July 1, 2023, was approved.

A payment to Tim Lally Chevrolet for a new command vehicle not to exceed $55,000 was approved.

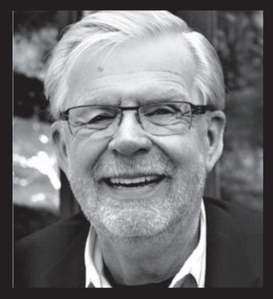
Alex Ott and New Buffalo Township Clerk Judy Zabicki with Agnes Conway

Alex Ott, Pete Rahm and New Buffalo Township Clerk Judy Zabicki

SPORTS

From the Bleachers

COLUMN BY KURT MARGGRAF IN CHICAGO



My lucky hat didn't work. Maybe if I had lucky shoes and socks, pants and a shirt, etc., but I doubt it.

Many of my friends gave up on the Bears after last week's loss to the Packers, but not me. Actually, I still won't give up on them after their disappointing loss to Tampa Bay. Next week, they play Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs, a game the Bears will be expected to lose. At that point they'll be 0-3 and most of the fan base will be calling for new coaches and a new quarterback, among other things. I believe I've shared this thought before, but being a fan, which is short for fan-atic, means being behind your team when they win, as well as when they lose.

Many of the Bears' problems were anticipated, but a few have been surprising. Most fans thought that Justin Fields would take a big step forward this season, but so far he actually seems like he's regressed. The coaching staff that seemed so patient and competent last season, seems to have been out coached in the first two games. The new players who were supposed to be so much better than their predecessors aren't playing any better. The silver lining to all this is that there's still plenty of time to turn things around, and all of their division rivals also lost this week.

\Because the Bears have been so bad, the Cubs have been flying under the radar. While they have had a very good season, they are now in jeopardy of missing the playoffs. They've lost five out of six on this road trip, including all three against Arizona. As of Sunday night, the Cubs now trail the Phillies, Diamondbacks, and the Marlins with only 12 games remaining in the season.

There are five teams battling for three spots. The Cubs will have to do well this week if they want to make the playoffs, because next week they play the Braves and the Brewers, two of the toughest teams in the National league. Meanwhile, the White Sox must win six of their 12 remaining contests to avoid one hundred losses.

I haven't painted the prettiest picture of our Chicago teams, but there is reason for optimism.

Members of the Blackhawks played a preseason rookie showcase game and it looks like they really do have a superstar in the making. Connor Bedard looked fabulous and scored three goals in the contest. Connor appears to have the tools to become the city's next sports superstar. One thing that escaped me was Bedard's birthday. When the Blackhawks drafted him, he was just a 17-year-old youngster, but now he's a shrewd 18-year-old. While they may not be a playoff caliber team this season, just watching him will be joyful.

Confucius said, "It does not matter how slow you go as long as you do not stop".

Be kind. Talk to you next week. Peace, love, and happiness.

Bridgman a road block for Lady Bison in volleyball

BY STAN MADDUX

The New Buffalo High School girls' volleyball team was stopped by a tough Bridgman squad in their bid to reach the finals in a recent tournament at home.

The Lady Bison after losing to Bridgman in all three sets early in the New Buffalo Invitational Saturday, Sept. 16, fell to the Bees again in the semi-finals 25-18 and 25-17.

"Bridgman has got a nice team. We played them tough. We just couldn't get over the hump," said New Buffalo Head Coach Bruce Molineaux.

Bridgman went on to lose to Brandywine in the finals.

New Buffalo (7-3-2) handily defeated Hartford twice in their only other matches in the tournament.

Jane Funk, a junior, led the Lady Bison attack with 28 kills in the tournament followed by junior Benita Puskunigis, who had 11 kills.

Funk, a starting varsity player since a freshman, also contributed 14 digs on defense along with four aces on offense in the four matches.

Senior Ava Johnson racked up 42 assists and scored four aces in the tournament.

Meagan Falter and Riley Tertel, who are also juniors, led the Lady Bison on defense with 25 and 24 digs respectively.

Tertel also had the most aces with six.

Other contributing players included Cassidy Saunders and Colleen Chlystun with eight kills apiece while Chlystun was also a factor on defense with 13 digs.

Josie Humphrey added four kills while she and Laura Wamser each had six digs.

New Buffalo on Sept. 14 needed five sets to defeat a scrappy Howardsville Christian team on the road.

The Lady Bison won the first set 25-23 then lost 25-19 before winning the third set 25-22 and losing the fourth set 25-22.

New Buffalo took the match by winning the final set 15-12.

Offensively, Funk led the team with 14 kills while adding nine digs on defense.

Johnson had 24 assists to go along with six kills.

Chlystun also had six kills, nine digs and two blocked shots.

On defense, the leaders were again Tertel and Falter with 13 and 11 digs respectively.

Olivia Plis contributed two kills and two blocks while Humphrey added two kills and three digs for New Buffalo, which was 3-0 in the Berrien Cass St. Joseph conference.

Molineaux said his team is on track to meet his expectations of winning the District 4 title in the post season tournament.

"We only start one senior. Everybody else is an underclassmen. We're improving. We're getting better," he said.

I think journaling is a key to success. You can set clear goals for yourself. You can start noticing repetitive behavior patterns and see the type of things that keep bothering you, and then you can have a bird's eye view of it.

— Eric Andre

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Raiders back on the winning track

BY STAN MADDUX

The Red Arrow Raiders came back nicely from their only a defeat to win their third game of the season in high school football.

The Raiders won 36-20 at Eau Claire Friday, Sept. 15.

"It was just a really good, physical, competitive football game," said Raiders Head Coach Matt Johnson

The score was 8-8 at halftime.

During the third period, the Raiders (3-1) gave themselves some breathing room with two touchdowns before the Beavers put the ball into the end zone again.

The highlights for the Raiders included 48 yard touchdown runs by senior halfback Owen Slavens and junior quarterback Ethan Lijewski.

Senior Payton Lijewski wound up in the end zone twice on pass receptions.

Junior M'Nason Smothers also scored a rushing touchdown.

On defense, Vaugh Nikkel had 11 tackles and assisted on 14 other tackles. Slavens had three solo tackles and assisted with 15 other tackles while Cam Forker recorded five solo tackles and helped with seven other tackles.

Forker also recovered a fumble.

Payton Lijewski was involved in 12 total tackles while David Nicely added five solo tackles, including three tackles for loss of yardage.

Jaquan Pierce was in on eight total tackles and recovered a fumble.

The Raiders defense gave up only one big scoring play, a 46 yard touchdown run, and held the Beavers to 236 yards rushing on 62 attempts.

Eau Claire had just seven yards passing.

"They had to fight tooth and nail for every yard they got. I would say that's probably our best defensive effort of the season," he said.

Offensively, the Raiders had 332 total yards with 256 of those yards gained on 32 rushes.

Lijewski threw for 76 yards by completing seven out of 14 passing attempts.

Johnson said he was pleased with how his team responded after starting the season with two blowout victories then losing to Marcellus 68-26 the previous week.

The level of physical play against Eau Claire was what he had hoped to see against Marcellus, which dominated more on the field with their strength and size.

"We were a week late but sometimes you have to learn those tough lessons," he said.

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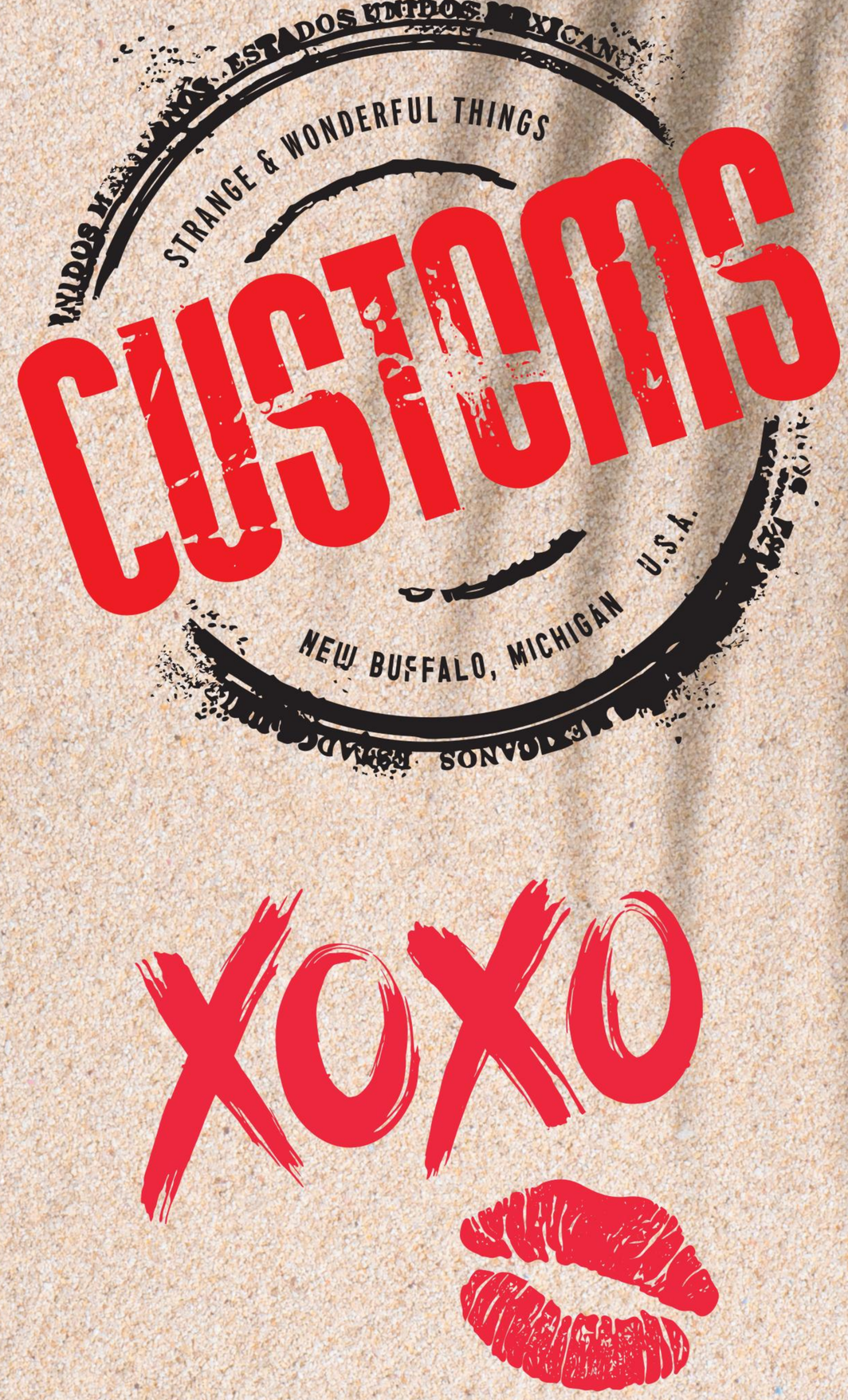
As the last of the *"strange and wonderful things"* left the store this week, we want to thank you, our customers, for many years of loyalty and friendship.

We know that Dee Dee is watching over all of us, and smiling.

The Staff of Customs Imports



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‘Some Enchanted Evening’ heralds the end of summer

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA\

Low lying clouds that held the threat for rain didn’t deter music lovers from enjoying a concert in celebration of the last notes of summer at the third annual Some Enchanted Evening Saturday, Sept. 16.

Concertgoers enjoyed an elegant picnic underneath the gazebo at Dewey Cannon Park in Three Oaks before migrating indoors to The Vickers Theatre to enjoy the music of John Williams performed by the Michigan City Chamber Music String Quartet. The performance included interesting interpretations of famous soundtracks, such as “Jaws” and Star Wars.”

The event was sponsored by Neil Hackler from Engel & Volkers Realty, 6 Linden, Vickers Theatre, Graham Tree Services and New Buffalo Explored.

Proceeds benefited the School of American Music’s Future Fund, the fundraising campaign to establish an endowment for the school. Every dollar donated to the Fund is matched by the Michiana Arts Foundation.

For more information or to donate, visit www.schoolofamericanmusic.com.

Guests enjoy a picnic dinner under the gazebo

The Michigan City Music Chamber String Quartet performs in the theatre

Sunflower fair again draws huge crowd

BY STAN MADDUX

Close to 10,000 people or more attended the 24th annual Sunflower Fair in downtown La Porte.

Whatever the number, there's no denying a several block section of Michigan Avenue that was closed to host much of the one-day fair on Saturday, Sept. 16, was packed with people enjoying what seemed like perfect autumn-like weather.

La Porte Events Coordinator Brett Binversie said there were more than 140 artisan vendors and about 20 food vendors to go along with the over 130 antique vehicles on display along the streets during the fair running from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Other attractions included live music along with carnival type rides and games for young children.

Binversie said attendance may have set a Sunflower Fair record but there was no way to know since people allowed to stroll in from each direction at no cost are not counted.

"I see new people coming in every hour. It's a nice steady crowd," he said.

A 1957 Volkswagen Beetle owned by Matthew Tulacz of La Porte was among the vehicles in the antique car show.

Tulacz said he came across the once baby blue colored vehicle stored in a barn in 1992 and purchased it for $1,000.

With help from his brother-in-law, Mike, restoration of the car began about 10 years later.

Tulacz said the now indigo metallic blue car draws a lot of attention primarily because of its new, striking color.

"It still gets a lot of looks even here with all of the big muscle cars. It gets a lot of looks," he said.

Also turning heads was a 1927 Studebaker pick-up truck owned by Bob Paul of Hudson Lake.

Paul said he obtained the truck after it burned up in a garage fire many years ago.

He put a new back end on the vehicle as part of its restoration.

Paul said he never repainted the truck, preferring the rustic look the metal body took on from exposure to the flames.

"It's kind of a neat thing. It's a lot of fun. A lot of people like it," he said.

A smooth riding 1988 Rolls Royce owned by Joe Novak of La Porte also captured the imaginations of many onlookers.

Novak said the paint and everything else on the car he purchased a few years ago from an estate for about $30,000 is original.

He said the luxury car when brand new was priced at $159,000.

"It's all hand assembled," he said.

Novak said he uses the car to provide rides for people to graduation ceremonies and other special events while dressed as a chauffeur to reflect the culture in England where that brand of car is made.

"When this became available I figured I'd snatch it up because I wanted something nobody else has," he said.

Food vendors seemed very busy.

For example, the La Porte Assembly of God was expecting to sell up to 500 Chicago Dogs as a church fund raiser judging by the number of sales at their booth by noon.

"We started doing this last year and it went over really well so now it's sort of become our thing," said Heidi Grace, whose husband, Jeff, is the church pastor

Ground broken on hotel and condominium high rises

BY STAN MADDUX

A ground breaking ceremony for a 14-story hotel and 12 story condominium tower was held Friday, Sept. 15, at a site close to Michigan City's lakefront.

A rooftop swimming pool, fitness center and spa along with restaurants, bars, cafes and retail shops are included in the construction plans for the site providing views of Lake Michigan on the upper levels of each building.

Farpoint Development out of Chicago is behind the estimated $240 million investment along U.S. 12 just a few hundred yards south of Washington Park.

Scott Goodman, founder and principal owner of the development firm, said the ongoing construction of a second South Shore Railroad commuter rail line to speed up travel to and from Chicago was a major factor behind the plans.

Goodman said there will be more than enough demand for the facilities because of the expected influx of Chicago residents coming here to visit and live from round trip travel times by rail being reduced by more than one hour.

Construction of the second line between Gary and Michigan City is expected to be completed next year.

"We think it's going to be a game changer for this part of Michigan City," he said.

The site will contain 130 condominiums and 230 hotel rooms along with 25,000 square feet of ground level retail space and parking garage with room for close to 400 vehicles.

Alan Schachtman, a partner in the development firm, said 60 of the condominiums will be strictly for short term rental use to meet demand for such housing locally.

Schachtman said there will be two, three and four bedroom condominiums with the larger ones priced at about $650,000.

"When you compare to Chicago, it's going to be incredibly affordable," he said.

About 100 of the hotel rooms will be suites while the remaining rooms at the hotel will be more traditional.

Construction likely starting before the end of the year is expected to be completed in about two years.

Clarence Hulse, executive director of the Economic Development Corporation Michigan City, said the site is projected to generate $430 million in property, wages and hotel taxes combined over a 15-year period.

"Not bad for a small town in the Midwest," he said.

The double track project is also the incentive for a structure containing 200 luxury apartments on 12 floors above the new South Shore Railroad commuter line train station on 11th Street, just east of Franklin Street.

Skyler York, the city's director of development and planning, said construction of that facility will begin in about three weeks.

He expects the economic impact from both sites to provide a significant boost to the revitalization that's already taken place on the city's north end over the past decade or so.

"We'll have a lot of visitors here but also we'll have permanent residents and people living downtown which is very important. It's a good thing," he said.

Mayor Duane Parry called the hotel/condominium project "a turning point" for Michigan City realizing its potential of becoming "a jewel of the south shore of Lake Michigan."

"This is going to set us apart," he said.

Parry also said other developments now in the talking stages could emerge from the economic snowballing effect anticipated from the double track as soon as early next year.

The entire lakefront area seems primed for major redevelopment.

Hulse said housing for the working class is the vision for the 100 acre Indiana State Prison site.

The Indiana Department of Correction has announced the prison in five years will merge into the new Westville Correctional Facility expected to start going up soon.

Higher end housing and other related amenities could go where the NIPSCO generating station now exists.

The lakefront generating station is slated to close in five years because of NIPSCO's move toward energy from the sun and wind.

The hotel/condominium site is also expected to be a springboard for reversing population decline and brain drain in the city.

Hulse said 20,000 new residents with 5,000 of those living on the north end is projected over the next 10 years.

"This parcel sets the tone for what's going to come," he said.

MHS TO HOST 'REMEMBER ME THURSDAY' CEREMONY NEXT WEEK

On Remember Me Thursday, a light is shone on the amazing rescue pets who fill our hearts and lives with joy to encourage pet adoption worldwide.

The Michiana Humane Society (MHS) hopes you join them Thursday, Sept. 28, to remember and light a candle for the pets that are no longer with us. Luminary bags are $5 each, and the luminary lighting ceremony is free to all. The MHS staff will light a luminary for Foxy, the senior dog adopted by its own rescue and social media coordinator, Brianne.

Brianne and Jimmy knew Foxy didn't have many days left, but they were determined to cherish every moment with her.

"We saw a beautiful soul. We saw her become a little puppy again…This little fox was something beyond special. My most loyal best friend who followed me everywhere. She was noticeably happiest when Jimmy, her, and I were together," Brianne said.

Honor your own beloved pets together with MHS and other pet owners that understand the heartache of such loss.

The traditional ceremony begins at 6:30 p.m. CT, with a few words before the lighting of the luminarias. MHS staff will leave them glowing until the sun has gone down, so that everyone can have a quiet period to remember their pets.

To dedicate a luminary, visit www.michianapets.org. MHS is located at 722 Indiana Highway 212 in Michigan City, Indiana. — STAFF REPORTS

Miss/Mr. New Buffalo Scholarship Pageant informational meeting this weekend

A Miss/Mr. New Buffalo Scholarship Pageant informational meeting will take place Sunday, Sept. 24, at Converge Community Church, 601 West Buffalo St. in New Buffalo.

A meeting for Little Miss, Jr. Teen and Teen contestants will be at 2 p.m. There will be a meeting for Miss and Mr. contestants at 3 p.m.

Little Miss contestants, which includes boys and girls, must be 5 to 9 years of age as of the pageant day. Jr. Teens must be 10 to 12 years of age the day of the pageant and Miss Teens must be 13 to 15 years old.Contestants must be a resident of New Buffalo and attend New Buffalo Area Schools.

Miss and Mr. New Buffalo contestants must be 17 to 19 years of age for Miss Blossomtime. Contestants must reside in the city of New Buffalo or New Buffalo Township and be in high school or their first year of college.

For more information, contact missnewbuffalo@gmail.com or Facebook at Miss New Buffalo.

Staff Reports

Members of the New Buffalo Service League inducted the following officers for 2023/2024 at their Wednesday, Sept. 13, meeting, at the New Buffalo Yacht Club: Hollis Oselka, president; Sue Kaminsky, vice president; Donna Messinger, recording secretary; Sallie Silvey, corresponding secretary and Deborah Schmidt, treasurer.

The league's major fundraiser, its Arts and Crafts Show, is scheduled to take place from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 21, at the New Buffalo High School gymnasiums at 1112 E. Clay Street in New Buffalo. The show will feature over 100 craft booths as well as a food and bake sale. There will be a $2 admission fee.

Proceeds from the show are dedicated toward the Mary Ann Frey Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships to area seniors.

For more information, contact 269-469-1364 or liveherenowng@aol.com.

— FRANCESCA SAGALA

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Demolition of former La Porte hospital progressing

BY STAN MADDUX

The old La Porte Hospital building is a shell of its former self nearly three months after demolition started.

Mayor Tom Dermody was a bit stunned at the seven story structure looking sort of like a skeleton but also excited about the future prospects of the site.

"You just always wondered what it would be without the hospital because I grew up with that hospital here. Now, we're going to have an opportunity to redevelop with the hospital something really neat for the future of La Porte," he said.

It's been close to three years since the downtown hospital along Lincolnway moved to a new four story, 200,000 square foot structure called Northwest Health a short distance away on State St.

Hospital and city officials have been working together on deciding how the use the site after completion of the demolition and clean-up.

For the short term, the site owned by the hospital will become a grassy area for the public to enjoy.

A decision on its long term use has not been made yet.

Dermody said his vision is for the site is a public gathering space for some type of special events to further the new activities hosted in the downtown since he became mayor in 2020.

He also would like part of the grounds used for new housing.

"It's a fresh start right downtown," he said.

So far, no timetable has been set on when to begin long term redevelopment of the property.

The demolition is on schedule to be finished before the end of the year.

Leigh Morris, a former president and chief executive officer of the hospital for more than 20 years, was more greatly impacted by the tear down.

Morris said he drove by the site early in the demolition but hasn't returned to avoid the emotions from a major chapter in his life vanishing from the landscape.

He called the building, which opened in 1972, a symbol of the community once served by two hospitals in aging facilities, banding together for better medical care.

Community members raised money to help finance construction of the former hospital overseen by a board of citizens originally.

Morris, who served one term as mayor after his tenure at the hospital ended in the late 1990's, said he also accepts that nothing is forever while keeping an eye on the future.

"Although I'm sad to see it go, I think we got to recognize that change is inevitable. Hopefully, the new hospital that we have is going to serve for another generation or two," he said.

Whatever becomes of the site, Morris said he hopes it's something valuable for the city.

"I hope it's developed in such a way that it adds to the vibrancy of downtown and makes it a more appealing place for people to want to be," he said.

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OBITUARIES

Nancy Elizabeth Smith
1927-2023

Nancy Elizabeth Smith, 96, of New Carlisle, formerly of Galien, died peacefully, Friday, September 15, 2023.

Her life began March 21, 1927, in Galien, Michigan, one of three children born to Russell and Dorothy McLaren. She married Duane Smith June 29, 1947 in Galien, Michigan. After sixty-seven years of marriage, he preceded her in death February 26, 2015.

Nancy was a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother. She and her husband attended every sporting event and dance recital, for their kids and grandkids, that they could. She was a 1945 graduate of Galien High School and attended Fort Wayne Bible College for one year. Nancy and Duane were longtime members of Olive Branch Church. They were Sunday School teachers, treasurer, usher, choir members, Ladies Aid member, and served or cooked for events.

Nancy will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by one daughter, Suzanne (John) Martin of Galien; two sons, Alan (Treva) Smith of Salem, Virginia, Ronald (René) Smith of Bend, Oregon; three grandchildren, Erica (Jim) Furlong of Roanoke, Virginia, Alexander (Jenn Brunink) Martin of Grand Rapids, Leslie (Mike) Caliguri of Grand Rapids; two great grandchildren, Zoey, Simon; two brothers, Robert (Naomi) McLaren of Noblesville, Indiana, William (Lisa) McLaren of Macomb, Illinois; and a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her beloved husband; her daughter-in-law, Michele Smith.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Nancy's life Saturday, October 21, 2023, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Roy Chilson American Legion Post # 344, 402 North Main Street, Galien.

Nancy will be laid to rest with her beloved husband in Galien Township Cemetery.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Nancy be made to Galien River Church, 201 North Cleveland Avenue, Galien, Michigan 49113 or to Southern Care Hospice, 1626 East Day Road, Mishawaka, Indiana 46545.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Pobocik Chapel, Three Oaks. Please share a memory or a message onlineat www.wagnercares.com.

HOROSCOPE

SEPTEMBER 21-27, 2023

AS INTERPRETED BY SANDY "STAR" BENDT

ARIES MARCH 21—APRIL 19

Even though a lot is happening in your professional life you will be pleasantly distracted by new developments in your love life. You have opportunity to move past some heavy issues that have kept you from getting involved or committing to another. Let go of bad feelings and truly connect.

TAURUS APRIL 20—MAY 20

New belief systems are in place and you have a better attitude this week. You may do some re-thinking when it comes to some previously agreed upon course and you may find that you cannot complete the job unless you change certain details. Be honest. Is this how you want to operate?

GEMINI MAY 21—JUNE 21

The energy of the week brings blessings in ventures surrounding legal and financial partnerships. You can expect to receive a recognition and/or confirmation that projects will be completed and that things will come together after all. Situations and ideals will shift significantly

CANCER JUNE 22—JULY 22

You will finally get to the bottom of some deep issues as intense emotions are brought to light. It is important you put your feelings on the line and let others know what you're expecting and what you're willing to give. High energy levels will help you navigate intense situations and resolve any conflicts.

LEO JULY 23—AUGUST 22

Connections between your physical and spiritual body will be made this week. You have the opportunity to understand what has been causing physical ailments or setbacks you may have been experiencing over the past couple of months. Take the time to have talk with medical professionals.

VIRGO AUGUST 23—SEPTEMBER 22

This week things could come to light about your partner or a prospective partner that some would call deal breakers. It is important you don't gloss over the facts or look away from the truth. This is an opportunity to have a good heart to heart and stand up for yourself and protect your energy.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23—OCTOBER 22

This is an excellent time to detox and get out of toxic patterns and habits. Schedule your annual checkup or create some potent tonics or juices. Clearing out toxins will contribute to clearer thinking. Clarity of mind will help you resolve issues you may be having with a dominant female relative.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23—NOVEMBER 21

It is time for you to remember that you are a good catch and worth keeping. You have had yourself out of the relationship arena for most of the summer. This fall you are going to be meeting someone who really piques your interest. If already committed you can expect a steamy reconnect.

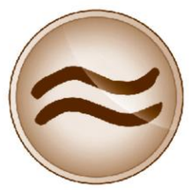
SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22—DECEMBER 21

Expect an epiphany about others this week. You will finally see where the all the negativity and toxic thoughts are stemming from. Creating harmony between family or house-mates is the focus now. You are in a place to mediate the peace and you can see situations and agendas clearly.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22—JANUARY 19

There will be new people entering your life this week who have common goals and ideas. This will expand your support system and give you an opportunity to brainstorm with likeminded people and come up with positive solutions to some of your current problems and shift to future goals.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20—FEBRUARY 18



The dark days are over; a major shift is coming Friday! You will find yourself in a place to realize a higher potential and your true vocation. Expect to feel a strong creative force guide you to a more abundant path with a more gratifying experience. Let go of negative projections and trust more.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19—MARCH 20

Issues with friends will get cleared up this week. You have the ability to more gratifying experience combat gossip and stand up against wrong ideas people have about others. Being able to see the hidden agendas and motives of others will help you understand the real reason people around you are not getting along.

We all need reminders.
— Dino N. Fatouros

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7		4	8			5		
		1			2		7	
9						8	3	1
							5	
		7		4		9		
4	7			8				
		2	9	5				
		8						

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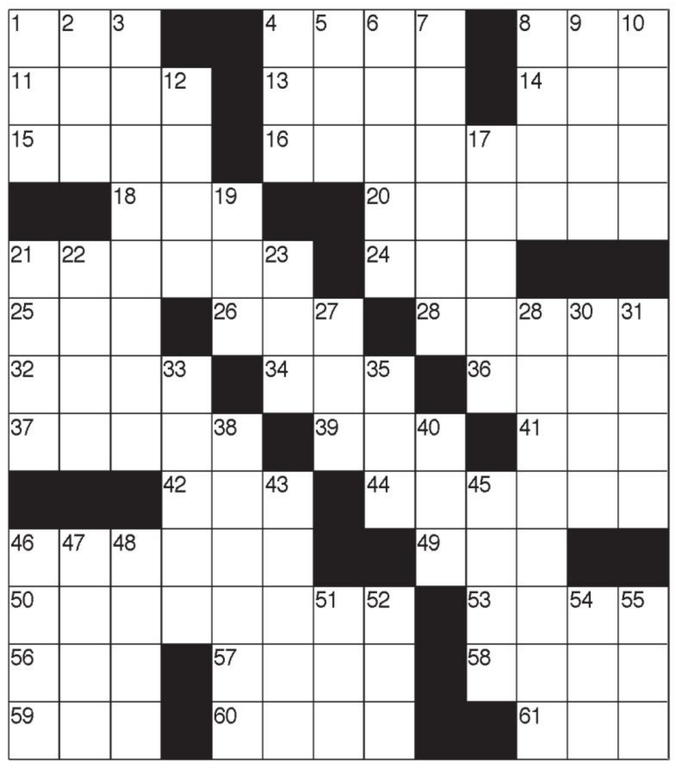
ACROSS

1 Accomplished
4 Ammunition
8 Unfavorable
11 Original sinner
13 Spurt
14 Here (Fr.)
15 Ottoman peasant
16 Fr. month
18 Banned pesticide
20 Charm
21 Parent of Agamemnon
24 Nothing
25 Spelling contest
26 Sheep's cry
28 State (Ger.)
32 Winglike
34 Uncouth person
36 Pelvic bones
37 Phil. island
39 Field
41 Cetacean
42 Hebrew letter
44 Gastropod
46 Butterfly
49 No (Scot.)
50 Asian
53 Academy (abbr.)
56 Antiaircraft artillery (abbr.)
57 Nipa palm
58 Southern France
59 Pounds (abbr.)
60 Cant
61 Ambassador (abbr.)

DOWN

1 Daughters of the American Revolution (abbr.)
2 Mountain on Crete
3 Reverie
4 Signed (abbr.)
5 Color
6 Ancient Italian
7 One of the Twelve Titans
8 Bibliography (abbr.)
9 Land measure
10 Legislature
12 Created
17 Many times more than (pref.)
19 Cask
21 Down with (Fr., 2 words)
22 Web
23 Skin vesicle
27 Mulberry of India
29 Baldness
30 Irish nobleman
31 Diplomacy
33 Fiber plant
35 Ancient stringed instrument
38 Of a reign
40 Own (Scot.)
43 Prairie copse
45 Lady's title
46 Ember
47 Saracen
48 Geological epoch
51 Amer. Automobile Assn. (abbr.)
52 Licensed practical nurse (abbr.)
54 Admiral (abbr.)
55 Fish with bait on the surface



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LCSO JAZZ TRIO TO PERFORM 'GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK FOR A SUNDAY AFTERNOON'

The School of American Music (SAM) will present a free family concert, "Great American Songbook for a Sunday Afternoon," which will consist of jazz standards and big-band era favorites by the LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra (LCSO) Jazz Trio at 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 8, at the Episcopal Church of the Mediator, 14280 Red Arrow Highway, in Harbert.

The LCSO Jazz Trio consists of Becky Osborn on piano, Don Parker on bass and Brad Staats on drums.

Becky Osborn has been the keyboard player with the symphony for the last 14 years. She taught music courses at Purdue University North Central for 22 years and high school choral music before that. Osborn is the owner of Music of Oz studio, where she coaches voice and teaches piano and leads a staff of 22 teachers. She has served as a vocal coach for the TV show, "Empire," directed many musicals, worked in church music and founded and directed the LaPorte Symphony vocal ensemble, "Illumination."

Don Parker has been playing bass for over 50 years, growing up in Danville, Illinois, where he came to love and play the whole range of music, including classical, jazz, rock, country, bluegrass, even marching band (playing the tuba). In addition to LCSO and the LCSO Jazz Trio, he gives private lessons, performs with the Zone 3 Band and various ensembles and theater orchestras around Northwest Indiana and is principal bassist and vice president of Valparaiso's South Shore Orchestra.

Brad Staats has been playing drums and percussion since he was in the fifth grade. He took private lessons all through high school, where he learned the skills of timpani, snare, drum set and other percussion. At the University of Arkansas, he performed with several university performance groups, such as marching band, concert band, jazz band, percussion assemble and others. He has been the principal percussionist for the LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra for 32 years. He has also performed with other local organizations such as the Elkhart symphony orchestra, South Shore Brass Band and Little Theater of LaPorte.

Admission to the concert is free, but a food item donation for Neighbor by Neighbor is requested. Tickets are available at SchoolofAmericanMusic.com. For more information, please contact SAM at 269-409-1191 or SchoolofAmericanMusic@gmail.com.

The SAM Family Concert Series is made possible by a grant from the Pokagon Fund, and donations to the School of American Music. Visit the SchoolofAmericanMusic.com to donate to the Future Fund, an endowment campaign to guarantee SAM's financial future. Every dollar donated to the Fund is matched by the Michiana Arts Foundation. SAM is a 501(c)(3) organization, and all contributions are tax-deductible. — STAFF REPORTS

Child custody dispute behind murder for hire plot from jail

BY STAN MADDUX

A man is accused of hiring a hitman from inside the La Porte County Jail to kill the mother of his children and her new boyfriend.

The hitman was an undercover police officer acting on a tip who negotiated the terms of the murder for hire plot.

Those are among the new details obtained in the case against Daniel Shaffer.

Shaffer, 45, is charged in La Porte Circuit Court with two counts of attempted murder and two counts of conspiracy to commit murder.

According to court records, Shaffer was in the jail waiting for auto theft and drug related charges to be decided when he allegedly began talking to a cellmate about wanting the people killed over an ongoing child custody battle.

The cellmate told him he knew people on the outside who could possibly do it for him.

Word leaked out to authorities who sent a police officer posing as a hitman to the jail to gauge his level of interest, said La Porte County Police Detective James Fish during a probable cause hearing on Friday.

"We were not exactly sure how serious he was at the time," he said.

Fish said the undercover investigation resulted in a deal where Shaffer would pay $4,000 per body.

He also allegedly agreed to a down payment of $1,000 in construction tools and making payments to retire the balance with anywhere from $200 to $300 a month in cash.

Fish testified the undercover investigation included taking pictures of the man and woman coming to and from their residence on Rumely St. in La Porte and showing the images to Shaffer who confirmed it was them he wanted killed before an upcoming child custody hearing.

"He did not want to know the details. He just wanted it done," he said.

Fish said information also developed that a new born infant was in the home but Shaffer did not want the baby harmed.

He also revealed Shaffer from the jail made arrangements for the officer he thought was the hitman to pick up the tools, which consisted of things like a wire stripper and battery powered skill saw.

Eventually, he said Shaffer appeared to become nervous that he was set up when the killings did not occur.

If convicted, Shaffer would face an up to 40-year sentence on each of the attempted murder counts and 10 to 30 years on each of the remaining charges.

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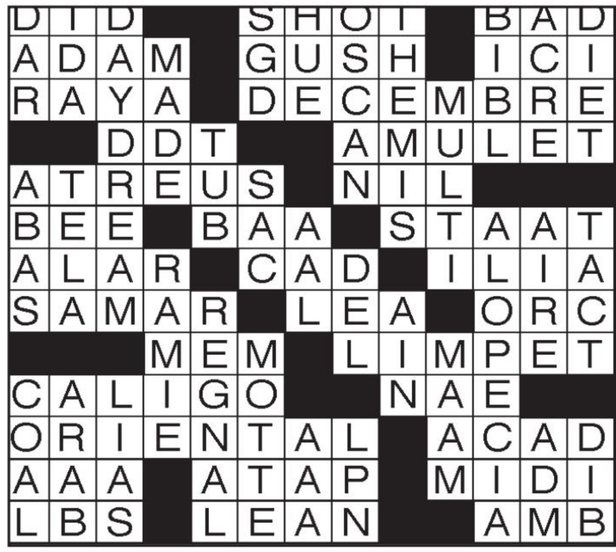

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A giant castle mural is splashed across one wall

Wedding cakes are on display in one window

Customers line up for treats

Zoe's Bakery showcases Asian culinary delights

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

According to owner JuJu Song, Zoe's Bakery is what occurs when the fusion of two cultures creates something beautiful - and delicious.

"We just combine different countries and cultures together and make something special - and hope everyone will like it," she said.

The bakery, which debuted last Friday, features Korean and Japanese treats, such as creative macarons and mille crepes.

Treats include Unit-shi Matcha Strawberry Basque, Strawberry Mille Crepes, Chocolate Original Basque and Chocolate Bowl Tiramisu. Macaron flavors are blueberry cheesecake, strawberry cereal and double chocolate ferrero.

There's also an array of beverages: matcha latte, brown sugar bubble tea, sunshine fruit ice green tea and smoothies.

"The matcha is all shipped from Japan, the best cut - that's all our beverage, so we just get everything from the best of things in other countries," she said.

For the signature latte, customers can choose their topping, such as tapioca or boba.

Song added that they also do wedding cakes, and that they can do "different styles - whatever people like."

It's Song's sister-in-law, Ting Zhao, who does all the behind-the-scenes baking. She started an Asian bakery while she and her husband, Evan, who's a teacher, were traveling throughout Korea and Japan.

Song added that Zhao, who also had a bakery in China, has traveled to different countries to teach baking, and that her speciality is wedding cakes.

Song's husband owns Song Asian Cuisine, which is also located in New Buffalo.

The bakery, though, is Zhao's and Evan's spotlight.

"We've done the restaurant for many years but right now, we want to support them, so my brother and her can be together and do something they like," Song said.

Ting Zhao, Evan and JuJu Song with (front) Zoe Song

The bakery is the namesake of Song's 7-year-old daughter, Zoe.

"My brother and sister in law, they watched her grow up since she was a baby - she's the only baby in the whole family," Song said.

Stepping into Zoe's Bakery is like stepping into a culinary fairyland: The walls are splashed with a cotton-candy pink color, with a large mural of a castle, unicorns and a carousel gracing a wall on one side. A crystal chandelier hangs beside a large, pink and white spotted giraffe.

Seeing as how it was named after her, Song said that Zoe played a pivotal role in the bakery's decor.

"She helped me paint the walls, all the products we have she picked out... When we do something, we'll let her pick her favorite (one) but actually, the customer likes her style," she said.

Taking the customers' cues on what they find most desirable helps Zhao know what culinary creations she should cook up next.

"Right now, we're not sure what people will like - we'll see what they want," she said, adding that they'll then make more treats.

Zoe's Bakery is located at 225 North Whittaker Street in New Buffalo. Current hours of operation are noon to 9 p.m. every day except Monday.

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